

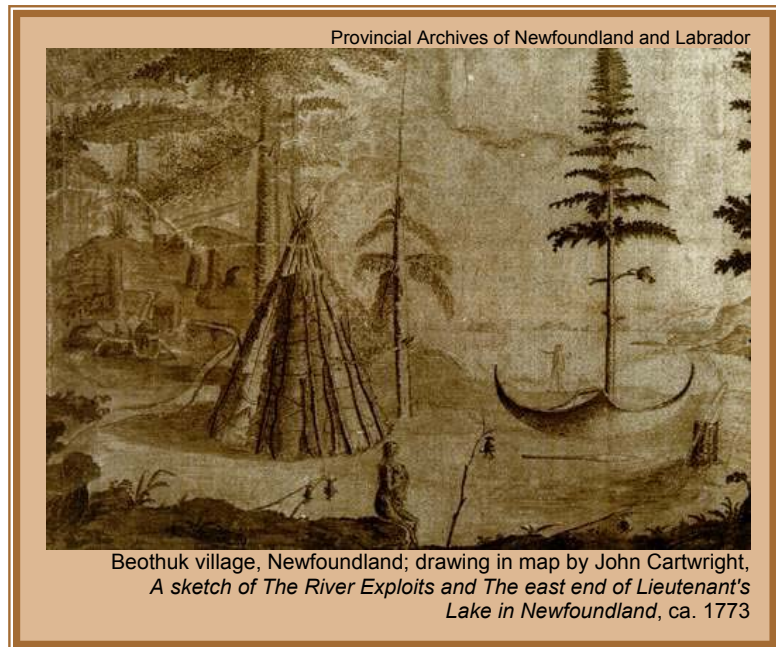
## On the arrival of two ships in Lisbon, Portugal, from the expedition of Gaspar Corte Real to the north Atlantic Ocean

Pietro Pasqualigo, Ambassador to Portugal from Venice, to his brothers in Venice

19 October 1501 \_\_\_\_\_

On the eighth of the present month arrived here one of the two caravels [sailing ships] which this most august monarch sent out in the year past under Captain Gaspar Corterat [Corte Real] to discover land towards the north; and they report that they have found land two thousand miles from here, between the north and the west, which never before was known to anyone.<sup>1</sup> They examined the coast of the same for perhaps six hundred to seven hundred miles and never found the end, which leads them to think it a mainland. This continues to another land which was discovered last year in the north. The caravels were not able to arrive there on account of the sea being frozen and the great quantity of snow. They are led to this same opinion from the considerable number of very large rivers which they found there, for certainly no island could ever have so many nor such large ones.

They say that this country is very populous and the houses of the inhabitants of long strips of wood covered over with the skins of fish. They have brought back here seven natives, men and women and children, and in the other caravel, which is expected from hour to hour, are coming fifty others. These resemble gypsies in color, features, stature and aspect; are clothed in the skins of various animals, but chiefly of otters. In summer they turn the hair outside and in winter the opposite way. And these skins are not sewn together in any way nor tanned, but just as they are taken from the animals; they wear



National Humanities Center, 2006: [www.nhc.rtp.nc.us/pds/pds.htm](http://www.nhc.rtp.nc.us/pds/pds.htm). In James A. Williamson, ed., *The Voyages of the Cabots and the English Discovery of North America under Henry VII and Henry VIII* (London: The Argonaut Press, 1929), pp. 40-41 (from a translation by H. P. Biggar). Images and paragraphing added by NHC. Complete image credits at [nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai2/imagecredits.htm](http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai2/imagecredits.htm).

<sup>1</sup> Corte Real explored the northeast coast of North America, probably Labrador and Newfoundland. He did not survive the voyage, and his brother disappeared the next year on an expedition to search for him. The fifty-seven Beothuk Indians captured by Corte Real were sold as slaves to finance the voyage; they did not survive long in Portugal.

them over their shoulders and arms. And their privy parts are fastened with cords made of very strong sinews of fish, so that they look like wild men. They are very shy and gentle, but well formed in arms and legs and shoulders beyond description. They have their faces marked like those of the Indians, some with six, some with eight, some with less marks. They speak, but are not understood by anyone, though I believe that they have been spoken to in every possible language.

In their land there is no iron, but they make knives out of stones and in like manner the points of their arrows. And yet these men have brought from there a piece of a broken gilt sword, which certainly seems to have been made in Italy. One of the boys was wearing in his ears two silver rings which without doubt seem to have been made in Venice, which makes me think it to be mainland, because it is not likely that ships would have gone there without their having been heard of.<sup>2</sup> They have great quantity of salmon, herring, cod and similar fish. They have also great store of wood and above all of pines for making masts and yards of ships. On this account his Majesty here intends to draw great advantage from the said land, as well by the wood for ships, of which they are in want, as by the men, who will be excellent for labor and the best slaves that have hitherto been obtained. This has seemed to me worthy to be notified to you, and if anything more is learned by the arrival of the captain's caravel, I shall likewise let you know.



<sup>2</sup> Pietro Pasqualigo had evidently not heard of the Cabot expeditions to the north Atlantic, and his inference is that this was the mainland of Asia, to which the articles must have travelled otherwise than by sea, i.e., eastwards from Europe across the continent. [Williamson, footnote, p. 41]